

Applicant notes that Kohchi, the Examiner's primary reference, has a U.S. filing date of April 20, 2001, whereas Applicant's invention has a foreign priority date of May 11, 2000 based on Japanese Application No. 2000-137968. Applicant submits herewith a verified English language translation of Applicant's priority document - Japanese Application No. 2000-137968, thereby perfecting Applicant's claim to foreign priority date of May 11, 2000. Therefore, Kohchi should now be removed as prior art to Applicant's claimed invention. Accordingly all of the Examiner's §102 and §103 rejections, which rely on Kohchi, should now be withdrawn.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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